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6 January 1983

LIBYAN ACTIVITY WORLDWIDE

Beginning about 1975, Libyan leader Qadhafi adopted a concerted policy of subversive activity, coup plotting, and support for "national liberation movements" in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, as well as support for some terrorist groups in Western Europe.

Qadhafi has been unscrupulous in promoting these aims, and a catalogue of offenses can be documented without difficulty: two unsuccessful coups against Sudan and ongoing attempts to unseat Nimeiri; three plots against Tunisia, the most recent being the Qafsa raid in January 1980; a coup attempt against Niger in 1976; intervention in Uganda in 1979 in an attempt to shore up Idi Amin's dictatorship; intervention in Chad in 1980.

In Africa, Qadhafi's behavior has been more circumspect than usual for the past year, out of reluctance to jeopardize his scheduled accession to the chairmanship of the OAU. Now that the chairmanship has almost certainly fallen through, there could be an upsurge of Libyan-sponsored subversive activity. Qadhafi never did stop working against certain key targets: Sudan--currently Qadhafi's highest priority target--where he is working with the Ethiopians to arm and train Sudanese dissidents for infiltration across the border; Somalia--Libya and Ethiopia are training and equipping an anti-Siad Somali insurgent group operating out of the Ogaden region of Ethiopia; and Niger, where Libya is supporting Nigerien dissidents based in Benin, training dissidents inside Libya, and encouraging rebellion by Tuareg nomads. Qadhafi is also stepping up Libyan involvement in Chad, where he is attempting to undermine the Habyarimana regime by increasing support to Chadian dissidents.

In the Middle East, Qadhafi's reliance on terrorism and subversion and the insults he has heaped on Arab leaders in recent speeches have seriously isolated Qadhafi from his Arab colleagues. He supplies money, arms and training to a variety of Palestinian groups, and gives the Polisario Front fighting in Western Sahara significant amounts of military equipment. He continues to train a large number of Tunisians in paramilitary and sabotage techniques at camps inside Libya, with a view to using them to destabilize the Bourguiba government. He has been providing financial and military support for factions of the South Yemeni-backed National Democratic Front for several years.

Libya's relations with West European governments reached a low point in 1980, when Libyan hit squads murdered ten Libyan dissidents in Rome, London, Bonn, Athens, Milan, and Manchester, England. Qadhafi finally abandoned that policy, and West European governments responded by seeking to maintain or improve their ties with Libya, arguing that isolation would drive Libya more firmly into the Soviet camp. He does not appear to be currently involved in European terrorist activity. Last October, however, he publicly warned Libyan dissidents in exile to "repent" and return home or face a renewal of the murder campaign.

Libyan involvement in East Asia is largely limited to support for dissident Muslim groups. Last fall Qadhafi signed a friendship and cooperation treaty with North Korea, which has long provided training to limited numbers of Libyans in guerrilla warfare and agent operations.

In Latin America, Libyan efforts are small-scale and largely motivated by Qadhafi's desire to strike at the US by undercutting its interests in its historical sphere of influence. Libya has been involved in training and supplying Salvadoran insurgents since the spring of 1980. It has been attempting to make inroads among radicals in the English-speaking Caribbean since late 1979, funding various projects and cultivating leftist politicians.

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